

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 29, 2011

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, each year we recognize November as National Adoption Month. I encourage my colleagues in both chambers to raise awareness about the adoption of young boys and girls in our foster care system who dream of one day having a forever family. Many of us have brothers or sisters, aunts or uncles, sons or daughters, who have lovingly decided to add to their family through adoption. By raising awareness about the many benefits of adoption, and the process for families and children in foster homes, we can make sure more children go to sleep in their own home every night.

According to the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, 423,000 children are living without permanent families in the U.S. Today, 115,000 of these children are eligible for adoption but almost 40% will wait more than 3 years in foster care before being adopted. Every single year—and this number is climbing—over 29,000 of our young people “age-out” of foster care. A child that “ages-out” is more likely to be undereducated, unemployed, homeless, addicted to drugs or alcohol and/or utilizing government benefits to survive, compared to their peers who grew up outside the foster care system or were adopted before aging out. Our children deserve better than this, and the good news is we can help. We can help by encouraging more families to consider adoption, and offering assistance to those who do by extending the adoption tax credit.

Our young people are our greatest treasure. To continue to allow thousands of our young people to begin adulthood at a distinct disadvantage would be devastating. Please consider the plight of so many of our children and young adults living in foster care; shuttled back and forth between homes, towns, cities, schools, friends, support groups, and so on. Children in foster care without a more permanent structure and support system are more likely to distrust adults or have strained relationships with the adults in their lives and with their peers.

National Adoption Month is also an opportunity to recognize the foster parents in our communities who are selflessly giving so much to help our youth. They too deserve our support and our thanks. Foster parents across this nation are wonderful examples for all of us and provide some of our most vulnerable young people with protection and a sense of family and home. I appreciate their sacrifice and I hope they know it does not go unnoticed. The decision to become foster parents or adoptive parents can sometimes be scary; not knowing how one's family dynamics may be impacted or if you'll be able to create a bond with the child and the child with you. To all who may be considering these options today, trust me. I know from personal experience that the worry melts away as soon as you bring that special child into your home. As a foster grandparent, and now a proud grandpa of two adopted children, I can assure you that it won't be long before you realize that it's not just the children who gain so much through adoption. You too gain more joy and more love than you ever could have imagined.

Look for ways that you can get involved with adoption efforts in your local community. Locate adoption services in your community and help with your time, money, or both. Adoption is essential to the health of our nation. Supporting adoptive parents, adoption agencies, and foster parents is a duty for all of us.

RECOGNIZING THE ABILITYONE PROGRAM

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 29, 2011

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the AbilityOne Program, which has helped more than 47,000 blind or significantly disabled Americans develop skills and receive training ultimately leading to successful employment.

The AbilityOne Program harnesses the purchasing power of the federal government to buy products and services from participating community-based non-profit agencies that are dedicated to training and employing individuals with disabilities. This program affords Americans with disabilities the opportunity to acquire job skills and training, receive good wages and benefits, and gain greater independence and a higher quality of life.

I am proud to acknowledge two non-profit agencies, Skookum and Lighthouse for the Blind, both of which are closely associated with AbilityOne in my district. These organizations represent two of many non-profit social enterprises dedicated to the mission of enriching the lives of people with disabilities.

Skookum's mission is to create opportunities for people with disabilities, assisting government customers by delivering critical logistics, facilities maintenance and public works services. Skookum was recently awarded the 2010 National AbilityOne Award for Performance Excellence in Hiring Veterans with Disabilities which demonstrates a proud commitment to recruiting the right person for the right job and bringing Wounded Warriors into our workforce.

Lighthouse for the Blind has been providing employment, support, and training for people who are blind, deaf-blind, and blind with other disabilities in the Puget Sound since 1918. Lighthouse for the Blind expands employment opportunities by providing the technical and communication tools needed for self-sufficiency. The manufacturing operations center makes products for the Federal Government and various aerospace companies.

It is with great pleasure that I extend my support to the AbilityOne Program. The dedication and commitment of Skookum and Lighthouse for the Blind help individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities find employment, live fuller lives, and remain active members of our community. I commend everyone associated with AbilityOne for working to improve so many lives and make our country a better place for all.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SERVICE OF SIX RETIRING OFFICIALS WITHIN USDA'S OFFICE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

HON. MARK S. CRITZ

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 29, 2011

Mr. CRITZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the distinguished public service careers of six retiring officers within the Department of Agriculture's Office of Rural Development, RD. These individuals have worked diligently and effectively over many years to promote economic prosperity and safe living in the various rural communities throughout southwestern Pennsylvania. Lambert Rosenbaum, Virginia Stump, Cindy Brandt, Barbara McMillen, Susan O'Donnell, and Mary Ellen Polosky have made clear through the quality of their work at RD that they see a place for rural areas in America's future. These individuals will leave a lasting legacy; their belief in the promise of rural America will surely live on in those who have had the privilege to work with them and manifest itself in all that RD does for the individuals, communities, and businesses of southwestern Pennsylvania for years to come.

Public service has been a calling for each of the six outgoing officials at USDA Rural Development. Lambert Rosenbaum, the outgoing Area Director for the Butler and Westmoreland Area Offices, boasts a 31 year career at USDA. In addition to his civil service, Mr. Rosenbaum served three years of active duty in the Army, during which he served a combat tour in Vietnam and earned the prestigious Bronze Star. He has also served in the Army Reserves for 42 years. Most recently, Mr. Rosenbaum's reserve service took him to Kuwait, where he earned the Meritorious Service Medal. His devotion to the public welfare has clearly made an impression on his children, as two of his sons have served in the Iraq War.

Virginia Stump, a Team Leader and Area Specialist, will leave RD after 30 years of civil service. She has worked extensively on the Water Waste Program, which furnishes rural communities with the means to install sanitary sewers. She has also helped to market several rural development programs, including the Value Added program and the Renewable Energy programs. Ms. Stump is married and has one daughter, as well as twin grandchildren.

Cindy Brant, a Loan Specialist, also has over thirty years of experience in civil service. She began her career with USDA in 1979 as a Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, CETA, Trainee. A year later, she became an Assistant County Supervisor, working out of the Somerset Office until its closure in 2007. While in the Somerset Office, she worked extensively on the Direct Housing Program, helping numerous low-income individuals to purchase homes in rural areas. Upon leaving Somerset, she moved on to the Greensburg Area Office and took on the additional roles of Guaranteed Housing Program Specialist and Multi-Family Housing Program Specialist. In recognition of her outstanding service, Cindy received USDA's Unsung Hero Award in 2009.

In her 28 years with USDA, Barbara McMillen, an Area Specialist, has worked on a